



Research summary: Exploring an automatic enrolment model to the Canada Learning





**Research summary: Exploring an automatic enrolment model to the
Canada Learning Bond**

Large print, Braille, MP3 [audio], e-text and DAISY formats are available
on demand by [ordering online](#) or calling 1 800 O-Canada [1-800-622-6232].

If you use a teletypewriter [TTY], call 1-800-926-9105.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, 2024


For information regarding reproduction rights:


droitdauteur.copyright@HRSDC-RHDCC.gc.ca.

PDF

Cat. No. Em16-34/2024E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-660-73826-0





From: ESDC Innovation Lab, Employment and Social Development Canada.

Official title: Developing an automatic enrolment model for the Canada Learning Bond to better support Canadian families with low income and encourage them to save for their child's post-secondary education.

Authors of report: Anastasia Chebakova, Sonia Chwalek, Flynn Gottselig, Nadiya Safonova, Megan Strazds-Esenbergs.

Why this study

The purpose of this project was to explore possible design elements of an automatic enrolment model for the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) to address the low uptake of this benefit. Developing an automatic enrolment model for the CLB would streamline access to education savings and support early aspirations for post-secondary education for children in families with low-income in Canada.

The current rules around accessing CLB present significant barriers to families with low-income and can prevent them from receiving the financial support for which they are eligible. This is reflected by staggering statistics indicating that 2.25 million children in Canada, nearly 60% of the eligible population, are not enrolled in the program.

Over the years, communities of stakeholders have called for an automatic enrolment model for the CLB to address persistent barriers to access and low uptake of the CLB. An automatic enrolment model is an innovative and novel approach to benefit delivery currently being explored internationally. Automatic enrolment models commonly achieve near full enrolment. In response, this project explored the potential of using an automatic enrolment model. To maximize the feasibility of this innovative approach, this project engaged community organizations and Canadians in designing core elements of the model.

What we did

The project developed design elements to inform the implementation of an automatic enrolment model. The project team engaged with community-based organizations (CBOs) and CLB-eligible Canadians to create the elements of an auto-enrolment model to increase the uptake of the benefit by families with low income.

A human-centric approach was a key component to engaging with Canadians who often face systemic barriers in accessing Government services, such as the CLB. Known barriers such as literacy, geographic location, and trust played a role in how the research project was designed and conducted. Awareness of these known barriers faced by modest-income Canadians informed the ethical considerations of the current study.

The project used methodological triangulation to select the appropriate methods relevant to the research questions. The methods, data sources, and disciplinary perspectives used in the project included:

1. Review of relevant literature, reports, and available census and program data
2. Semi-structured interviews and design workshops with CBOs
3. Structured user-testing interviews with Canadians

Data sources included a review of literature from Canadian and international contexts, the 2022 CLB and 2016 Census data, expert consultations and engagements with CBOs and Canadians. Disciplinary perspectives of the researchers included political science, design and systems thinking, social work, and community psychology.

What we found

Almost all participants (Canadians and CBOs) voiced support for the idea of automatic enrolment because it would improve access to the benefit by streamlining the enrolment process for all eligible recipients.

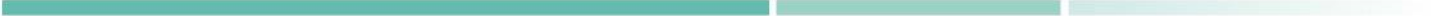
However, many participants highlighted that automatic enrolment would need to be accompanied by proper instructions and explanations on what the account is and how to use it. Most participants would like to have access to online support and clear information on how to use the RESP account. Specifically, the information needs to be clear so that there are no costs associated with the government-opened RESP account, and there are no contribution requirements or minimums. There also need to be clear instructions on how to withdraw and use CLB funds for post-secondary education.

Regarding RESP providers, both Canadians and CBOs indicated the value of individual choice. A sense of trust and familiarity with the RESP provider would be important for many families, such as if they already do their banking with a particular provider.

To preserve and encourage individual choice and mitigate involuntary relationships with financial institutions, it is recommended that any potential automatic enrolment model encourage flexibility and ease of transferring accounts. Caregivers and CLB beneficiaries should continue to be encouraged to open an RESP with a provider of their choice before automatic enrolment would take place by default. It would then be important to be transparent about who is providing the RESP and related parameters, as well as to provide an easy way for a caregiver to opt-out of having, or to close, an RESP automatically opened on behalf of their child.

What it means

Families with low-income often face a complex set of barriers that can affect both their educational aspirations and ability to save for their children's post-secondary education, even when they want to. For example, the rising costs of post-secondary education, insufficient loans and a discomfort with debt can attenuate educational aspirations of families with low-income. These families then face additional barriers related to accessing the CLB. The process of opening an RESP, which houses the CLB, is a highly complicated process.



Implementation of an automatic enrolment model to address known access barriers to the CLB for children from families with low income looks to be a promising approach. To support ESDC's continued exploration of this proposed delivery approach, the ESDC Innovation Lab has identified possible design elements of an automatic enrolment model for the CLB, including suggestions on notifications, enrolment timing, account access, RESP portal design, and support features.

Contact us

ESDC Innovation Lab, Strategic and Service Policy Branch

To request a full copy of the report, please contact the ESDC Innovation Lab.

Email: NC-LAB-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc